

SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

EDITORIAL OPINIONS OF THE LEADING JOURNALS
UPON CURRENT TOPICS—CONTINUED EVERY
DAY FOR THE EVENING TELEGRAPH.

The Georgia Difficulty in Congress.

From the N. Y. Herald.
Mr. Trumbull, from the Judiciary Committee of the Senate, has reported a bill with a preamble to the effect that whereas the Georgia Legislature, in disregard of the fourteenth amendment of the Constitution, has refused to purge itself of members (Rebels) ineligible under said amendment; and whereas a majority of said Legislature has expelled a number of members legally qualified upon the sole ground that they were persons of African blood; and whereas the local authorities of said State are wholly unwilling or unable to protect the lives, liberties, and property of lawful and non-violent citizens from violence, therefore, "be it enacted," etc., that so much of the act of July 25, 1868, as restores Georgia to the rights and dignities of a State be repealed, and that the late military government over Georgia be revived; that meantime the present State government shall be considered as provisional only; that the expulsion of the negro members from the Legislature is null and void, and that they shall be restored; and that it shall be the duty of the President to use such of the land and naval forces of the United States as may be necessary to carry out this act.

Now it has been supposed that with the restoration of a Rebel State to Congress nothing further could be done with it by Congress in reference to its local affairs—that Georgia, for instance, in being restored is all right again, like New York or New Jersey. It now appears, however, that this is all a mistake. The fourteenth amendment of the Constitution, among other things, provides for equal civil rights to citizens of all colors, and that certain political disabilities shall fall upon certain classes of men guilty of rebellion. The amendment further provides that Congress shall have power to enforce all these provisions by appropriate legislation. Hence this bill from the Senate Judiciary Committee in reference to Georgia. But is this proposed legislation appropriate? The answer rests with Congress. Nor is this power and discretion limited to the late Rebel States; for, as the Constitution applies to all the States and Territories, etc., the law may be applied to New York or New Jersey, as well as to Georgia or Louisiana, for a disregard of amendment fourteen.

For example, the Senate Judiciary Committee report a bill declaring that under said amendment the expulsion of the negro members from the Georgia Legislature is null and void, and that those expelled blacks must be restored to their seats. Let this bill become a law for Georgia, and we shall have a rule established for New York and all the other States—the rule of equal rights to hold office to citizens regardless of color. This is the Georgia question now before the Senate.

Indians in Alaska.

From the N. Y. Tribune.
It is already well known that our new Territory of Alaska is pretty nearly an earthly paradise, with skies of surpassing beauty and brilliancy, with a soil so fertile "that if you tickle it with a hoe, it laughs with a harvest;" but there is one natural production of this favored spot which secures to us the rare satisfaction of practice in the fine art of murder. We refer to Indians. With our usual sagacity and good luck, we have got into a pretty quarrel, and have already captured one chief and looked him up in the guard-house. Two private aborigines we have honorably wounded, and the savages have in their turn wounded one white warrior. In short, a thoroughly bad feeling has been established between the whites and the reds, and if we only take sufficient pains, and spare no expense, we may have a war in Sitka which will last a long time, make the fortunes of a great number of contractors, cover us all over with a blaze of martial glory, and add five hundred fresh brigadiers to the army list, to say nothing of a noble increase of admirals in the navy.

It is pretty hard to say exactly who is to blame in this foolish piece of business; but we may be sure that the Indians will get their share of blame and castigation. As we are the civilized and Christianized party, with plenty of guns and powder and ships and troops, it follows, as a matter of course, that these redskins must be quite in the wrong, and deserving of massacre whenever we can get at them. But, unfortunately, their villages are in the interior, and cannot, therefore, be conveniently shelled. It appears to us that there are two ways of expeditiously killing them off. In the first place, could not the smallpox be judiciously and effectually introduced among them? And what pestilence left of them—it would not be much—the fire-water might finish. A highly respectable contemporary observes:—"We can better afford to deal justly and even liberally with the decaying remnants of the original owners of the soil because their day is so far spent. Nature will soon enough solve the problem for them by extinction. Let not this great nation add to the long score of sins already laid up against it the guilt of hastening that day." This is undoubtedly the most compassionate view of the matter; but, after all, may there not be a titful weakness in the indulgence of these feelings of commiseration? Where is the guilt of hastening the day of extinction, when that process has been definitely resolved upon, or at least has been taken for granted as a matter of necessity? There is nothing more wretched than a decaying people perishing through the vices of civilization, dying a lingering death, and needing more than anything to be put out of its misery. If the Indian is incapable of enlightenment, of a comparatively elevated social position, or culture, of prudence, of industry, then he must be swept from the face of the country by the advancing tide of civilization—and the sooner the better! Thus far we only know that he has been difficult to deal with; but we are disinclined to set down any race as necessarily excluded from progress and elevation. Some races are undoubtedly harder to treat with than others; but before we give them up to extinction we desire to see a reasonable effort to save them from such a fate. Better murder them at once than assume their predestinate degradation. We tried this experiment with the Africans in this country, and they came nearer extinguishing us than we them. Unquestionably these Sitka Indians are difficult to manage, much more so than ever the Africans were; but it seems to us that if the extinction of a race has been fixed upon, common humanity requires that there should be no painful, lingering, torturing delay. The poor creatures are unquestionably in our power; and if we band industriously to the work, we may have them all dead, either by pestilence or whisky, in a year or two. Would this be hard-hearted? It seems to us that the cruelty is in allowing them to linger here without doing anything to promote their advancement and happiness. By the occupa-

tion of his hunting grounds you take from the Indian the means of support, and then, if he becomes troublesome, you kick him over the border to shift for himself. But he cannot flee from the civilization which has brought him only wretchedness. He is in the way; he is made to feel that he is in the way; he is robbed and cheated, and otherwise abused; and when he resists, never so feebly, he is subjected to war and murder, pillage and fire. The poets have sung of these wrongs very melodiously and pathetically; but no poet ever touched the heart of the red man, there is nothing more to say about it. Only don't torture him unnecessarily!

There is nothing which seems to us more extraordinary than the utter incapacity which the civilized show in their dealings with the barbarians. Something must be set down to selfishness and greediness of territory; but, unless we really intend to exterminate them, we must treat these Indians a little more justly and intelligently. As usual, a half-way policy is the best for neither party. It does not make the Indian contented or docile, and it ruins our own morals. Why not try a little vigorous and muscular cruelty.

The Darien Canal Treaty.

From the N. Y. Herald.

The Senate of the United States has now under consideration the treaty recently negotiated by Mr. Cushing, in Bogota, with the republic of Colombia for the protection of any company that may undertake the construction of a ship canal across the Isthmus of Darien. The subject is one of immediate and permanent interest so to that of the United States. With the immense empire and trade which we are rapidly building up on the Pacific shore and ocean, we require a shorter water route from the Atlantic than that offered by Cape Horn, and this is to be obtained only by cutting the Isthmus. Unfortunately this bar to the marriage of the coasting trade between our Atlantic and Pacific ports lies within the territory of a foreign power, and hence the necessity of a treaty which shall offer protection to the great sums which are requisite for the construction of the work and the vast commerce which will seek its facilities when completed.

Inasmuch as fully nine-tenths of the trade which will seek this line of water transit between the two oceans will be the domestic trade of the United States, it behooves the Senate to guard against the concession to a foreign power of a permanent and irredeemable tax upon our commerce for all time to come. There is no claim so repugnant to the common sense of justice which pervades mankind as the old feudal claim of the right to exact payment for transit on the ground of territorial sovereignty. This claim should be and has been rejected by the great mass of modern publicists, though it was unfortunately recognized by our ancestors, in the case of the concession by the New Granada Government for the construction of the Panama Railroad. No wise jurist will advocate such a claim, and no true statesman will concede it.

This principle has been conceded in the recent treaty with Colombia, and a permanent tax consented to in behalf of that government equal to an increase of one-third of the tolls which the capitalists constructing the canal may find it necessary to exact to reimburse them for their outlay. In return for this gratuity, the government of Colombia neither exacts one dollar towards the work nor offers it the slightest protection when constructed. It does not even give a map or survey of any kind of that portion of its territory which the canal is to cover. The survey is to be undertaken at our cost; we are to fight the native savages whom the Colombian government has not been able to subdue; our citizens are to find the money to construct the canal, and our Government is to provide troops and ships to protect it while building and ever afterwards. In view of these facts we claim that, in common justice to ourselves, the Senate should strike out of the Darien Canal treaty every clause which gives to the Colombian government any interest in the benefits of the work except such as may accrue to it from the alternate sections of land along the line of the canal.

Emigrant Sailing Ships.

From the N. Y. Times.

We recently expressed our fervent hope that good might come out of evil in the case of the horror-ship James Foster, and that the sacrifice of human life among the passengers and crew, and the fearful sufferings of the survivors, due to the rapacity of the owners and the inhuman cruelty of those employed by them, would not, after all, be without their influence for the welfare of future emigrants. And we are more disposed than ever to hope and believe that they will not be. The more widely the details of the case are read and understood, the more general we feel assured, will become the conviction that for the future no emigrants seeking our shores should be exposed to the possible risk of such sufferings and such treatment. It so happens that in the present case an unusually protracted voyage, exceptionally rough weather, and three or four peculiarly brutal officers, combined to aggravate the normal discomforts and dangers of the voyage, and to bring about the state of things brought to light in the investigation before the Commissioners of Emigration. Owing to the continual storms through which the vessel passed, the passengers were confined down below for a considerable portion of the time, and the rough weather also operated unfavorably in increasing the difficulties under which they labored in getting their scanty supply of food cooked. Ship fever and diarrhoea soon made their appearance, and found the passengers with their health undermined by confinement and the insufficient supply of bad food, and their spirits broken down by suffering and cruelty, in no condition to resist their ravages. On arrival at this port the vessel was visited in quarantine, and owing to the deaths and the prevalence of infectious disease, she was detained, and the case subjected to the investigation it is now undergoing.

There is no doubt, we admit, that the case of the James Foster is an exceptionally bad one. But we should like very much to know how far it differs in reality from that of the great majority of sailing vessels that arrive at this and other American ports with emigrants from England, Ireland, Germany, or Sweden. It had not been for the fever, and the consequent detention in quarantine, we should probably have heard nothing at all of the incidents and conditions of the voyage. We fear that few of these ships arrive without those on board who could tell a tale of privation and ill-treatment varying in the main but little from that extracted from the passengers on the James Foster. As a rule, passengers of that class are too glad to reach their destination to dwell upon the sufferings of the voyage, and are easily frightened orajoled into silence, even if they know how to set about making public a record of their grievances.

We repeat once more our firm conviction that the interests of humanity demand that a stop shall be put to the conveyance of emigrant passengers in sailing vessels from Europe to America. There is no reason why it should

be permitted to continue, and many why it should be suppressed. In the first place, if the steamship lines, notwithstanding all the existing competition, cannot afford to supply emigrants with sufficient of the plainest food for fourteen days for less than five pounds, it seems clear that the owners of sailing vessels cannot provide them with food fit for their proper sustenance for fifty or sixty days for little more than half, or at least two-thirds, of that sum. On the steamers, too, their greater size and superior accommodations give far greater facilities for insuring the cleanliness and ventilation absolutely necessary to health. The reputation which established lines have to keep up, too, and the presence on board of cabin passengers, are guarantees against ill-treatment, which do not exist on sailing vessels. The case, too, is one as to which there can be little or no prospect of amelioration. Now that the steamers have reduced their stowage fare to its present figure, the only possible way in which profit can be made out of the conveyance of emigrants in sailing ships is by not only keeping them on the verge of starvation, but by engaging landmen as sailors, and inducing emigrants to work part of their passage out, instead of employing experienced hands. On the James Foster it seems that but seven out of a crew of over forty had ever been to sea before, and we believe that such is the ordinary state of affairs on board such vessels. Their owners cannot afford to engage able seamen, and the passengers are consequently exposed to the risks and delays consequent upon unskilful handling of the ship.

The time has come, we submit, for searching investigation on both sides of the Atlantic into the whole subject, the result of which, we feel confident, would be fatal to the employment of sailing ships for emigrant purposes. The disclosures would assuredly be such as to urgently call for the adoption by all maritime countries of a system of supervision and a code of regulations for the protection of emigrants, more strict and less open to evasion than those now in use, which would virtually put an end to it. It is one which ought, at least, to be pressed upon the attention of the Government authorities of all countries concerned.

Whither We Are Tending.

From the N. Y. World.

We do not suppose that General Grant or the Republican party have, at present, any intention of transforming the American republic into a monarchy. General Grant merely aims at a reelection, and the Republican party at the perpetuation of its power by making voters of all the negroes. In the expectation that the great body of them will always vote with the party to which they are indebted for their emancipation. The mass of our people have had so long a training in free institutions, and are so strongly attached to them, that it would be a folly little short of madness for anybody, at present, to entertain hopes of supplanting republicanism in this country. But the radical party has, nevertheless, set a train of causes at work which tend irresistibly to the establishment of a monarchy, and by the shortest and speediest route by which that result could be reached.

The seeds of political changes are always sown some time before they bear their fruit. Our great civil war and the overthrow of slavery were not seriously anticipated by any considerable proportion of our people until those mighty events were close upon us; but their causes had long been in active operation. Even our independence was an unlooked-for event up to within a few months of the Declaration; although, when we now turn our view back upon the previous history of the country, it is easy to see that the colonies had long been advancing steadily in that direction. De Tocqueville, in his able work on the "Ancient Regime and the Revolution," remarks that the keenest political observers of Europe just before the outbreak of the French Revolution (he mentions Frederick the Great as one example) had no foresight or conception of the stupendous throes which were about to convulse France and Europe; yet it was the main purpose of De Tocqueville's book to prove that the causes of that desolating upheaval could easily be traced in the circumstances of the ancient régime. In like manner, the English Revolution of 1688, which expelled James the Second and brought in William the Third, was not anticipated by the great body of the English people until the change of dynasty was close upon them; but its causes have been in operation ever since the restoration of the Stuarts. These examples will suffice to show how undiscerning contemporaries commonly are of the signs of approaching changes in the character of their institutions.

We have fully acquitted General Grant of any intention to substitute monarchy for republicanism in this country. If any such purpose should ever enter his mind, it will be suggested by him, we claim, that no claim observer, who will be at the pains to reflect on the tendencies of recent measures, can doubt that the country is being borne along, on a strong current, in an imperial direction. The war has done much to infuse vague imperial ideas, and fill the public imagination with the idea that the central authority at Washington is supreme and all-controlling. This resistless ascendancy of the Federal Government is, as yet, as the people conceive it, a republican ascendancy—a dwarfing and weakening of the numerous small republics which we call States, and an absorption of their powers into that greater and more expansive republic which we call the Union. Previous to 1860, slavery was regarded by all our statesmen as beyond the reach of the Federal Government; but the Federal Government has abolished it. A conscription by State authority to serve in the State militia was always held legal; but it was not until the late war that anybody supposed that a conscription could take place by Federal authority. The overthrow of the banking systems of all the States by the General Government, and the establishment of a paper legal tender by Federal law, mark another great innovation, which no statesman or jurist ten years ago believed to be within the scope of the Federal power. The governing of numerous States by sheer military authority, and their exclusion from representation, would have been regarded, even five years ago, as an incredible stretch of Federal power. The regulation of the suffrage by the same power does equal violence to all former notions upon this subject. The idea that the States have any rights which the Federal Government is bound to respect has become so broken down that the popular imagination cannot hereafter be greatly shocked by any new assumptions of authority by the central power. It is true that the greater sovereignty in which all the independent powers of the lesser sovereignties have been swallowed up is as yet a republic, with an elective legislature and executive. But it is equally true that the mass of the people have become familiarized with the idea of one imperial central power, which takes all the authority it sees fit to exercise, and against which the protests of the weak States are vain and idle.

The only questions which remain (unless the people can be brought to a counter-revo-

lution) are, by whom this imperial central authority shall be exercised? and, whether those who exercise it shall continue to be elected by the people? The changes in our institutions having been brought to this advanced stage, let us inquire whether there are causes in operation tending to revolutionize the structure of the Central Government, which has absorbed the sovereignties, annihilated the independence, and usurped all the greater powers of the States. Will the consolidated Central Government continue to maintain its present organization? The enemies of the new order of things are all in the opposite direction. The fierce and stubborn contest between the President and Congress, which has been waged for the last four years, has already shaken the structure and destroyed the balance of Federal government. The President has been subjugated, and reduced to a mere ministerial officer of Congress. This may seem, at first view, to favor the expectation that our new consolidated imperialism will be permanently republican in its character, and not monarchical. But reflection will be a strong reaction in the popular mind in favor of a strong and unfettered Executive; and if the Congressional régime runs on until the evils become scandalous and intolerable, the violence of the reaction will be in proportion to the public sense of the mischief. If a resolute man, a man who shrinks from no responsibility, happens to be President when the current begins to set strongly the other way, the people will readily support him in assuming most of the powers, though not at first perhaps the name, of a monarch. He can easily acquire power enough at the beginning to serve as the sure foundation of all he may subsequently covet, if an efficient, honest, and orderly administration shall present a sufficient contrast to the state of things which he suppresses. Considering the scandalous corruptions that have already grown up under Congressional supremacy, there is nothing extravagant in the supposition that, even before the termination of General Grant's first term, the public mind may be ripe for a very vigorous reaction, on which a man skilled in the command of armies, and having all the ablest generals as his personal friends, may ascend to a height of authority from which he cannot afterwards be dislodged.

Another cause which is destined to operate even more powerfully in supplanting republican institutions in this country is the debasement of the suffrage by bestowing it universally upon negroes, giving the race the balance of power and the real control of the elections. There could be no more effectual way to disgust the intelligence of the country with republican government than such a debasing caricature of it. A great many people are coming already to doubt the wisdom of republican government in our large cities, where there are large classes of vicious and disorderly people who debate the suffrage, and render honest government well-nigh impossible. The effect of the negro suffrage amendment will be to debase the suffrage to a still lower level in the rural districts of nearly half the country. It is not probable that the suffrage can ever be taken away from large classes who have once possessed it; and a remedy will be sought in withdrawing the most important affairs and officers from the popular vote. When a debased universal suffrage comes to bear its full fruits, the intelligent public sentiment of the country will demand in our political system a strong balance-wheel not dependent on universal suffrage. People will prefer to be governed by an intelligent, independent monarch, rather than misgoverned by universal suffrage, such as universal suffrage will be when the negro experiment shall have developed its consequences.

There are various other causes which tend in the same direction, but those which we have explained are the most powerful and portentous.

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